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↔EDITORIAL NOTES↔

Our readers are requested to make the following verbal corrections in the article of Professor Lyon published in the December Number. On page 104 in the sentence beginning "On any given ethical question," for "ethical" substitute "critical." On page 105 the "itinerancy of the wanderings" should read "the itinerary of the wanderings."

The Use of Commentaries.—How is a commentary to be used? Are commentaries generally used or abused? These are practical questions?

Some students use the commentary first; if any time remains, and this is seldom the case, they take a glance at the portion of Scripture which they persuade themselves that they have been studying. Some read the passage under consideration hastily, glance over the first lines of each paragraph in the commentary, and wonder why commentaries are so dry. Some go nervously from a word in the text to the comment upon it, or from the comment to the word, twisting and confusing various comments and different words. Some, though but a moment of time is at their disposal, decide absolutely upon many questions; if the commentator seems to hesitate, if he fails to present a positive solution, he is regarded as loose, and unworthy of confidence. Some, finding that various explanations have been offered in the case of a certain expression, conclude at once that it is not worth while to give much attention to the study of the Bible, about which there may be held such divergent views. Some have no regard whatever for the views propounded in a commentary, and seek to ascertain those views only that they may be able to adopt one which the commentary does not suggest. It is probably true that by nine persons out of ten the use of a commentary is rather an abuse.

But what is the commentary for? When? As often as there is need. How? By complementing and supplementing the knowledge of common sense of which the ordinary Bible student is supposed to be possessed. There is a use of commentaries which is worthy of consideration. Study the portion of Scripture *first* without assistance. Read it carefully, examining every word, if possible, in the original, at least in the translation. Read it a second time, marking the relation which exists between the sentences and parts of sentences. A third reading will throw much additional light upon the matter in hand. Now note those words or phrases which you do not seem perfectly to comprehend. And again, those words and phrases of the meaning of which you can obtain no satisfactory idea.

There are three elements, (1) that which you seem to understand; or (2) that which is more or less doubtful; (3) that which is entirely uncertain as to meaning. *Now*, but not until now, refer to the commentary, and see what solutions or explanations are suggested for those points of greatest difficulty. Weigh the views that are presented, and decide, with the light which you have, i. e., in view of all the circumstances, upon that which is the most satisfactory. Examine the remarks touching the questions which were partly but not entirely understood. Finally read over whatever else may be said in the commentary, and note everything suggested, which did not occur to you. Read over the passage with all the light which has thus been shed upon it. If you have several commentaries, pur-

sue the same method. Use them (1) to solve difficulties which you could not be expected to solve; (2) to throw light upon that which is more or less doubtful; (3) to suggest that of which you might not have thought. Use commentaries, but do not *abuse* them.

In Reference to Higher Criticism.—The publication of Dr. Lyon's article on *The Results of Biblical Criticism* in the December STUDENT has started one or two questions in the minds of some of our readers: What is the position of THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT on this subject? If its position is a conservative one, does it do right to publish the views of those who are not so conservative? The Editor of the STUDENT appreciates the fact that these are important questions. They are the test-questions which are put to every instructor in the Old Testament department. It is true, as has often been said, that the position of no religious instructor is so delicate and difficult as that of the Professor of Hebrew in our theological seminaries. The difficulty of the position, however, varies somewhat, a greater amount of freedom being allowed in some denominations than in others. What seems necessary to be said in this connection may be classified under the head of facts and under that of conclusions which are thought to be clear in consideration of these facts.

It is a *fact* that, in Germany, every scholar, of any considerable reputation, save one, has accepted to a greater or less extent the results which Higher Criticism claims to have reached.

It is a *fact* that among these scholars, no matter what may be said to the contrary, the degree of unanimity which has been reached in reference to the more important points is, indeed, remarkable.

It is a *fact* that in England a large proportion of the most reputable clergymen and scholars, even in the denominations which pride themselves upon their strict orthodoxy, have adopted in whole or in part these views.

It is a *fact* that in America a respectable number of the most esteemed Old Testament scholars sympathize in a few cases openly, in many cases privately with these views.

It is a *fact* that just as the general view of the interpretation of important portions of Scripture, [e. g., the interpretation of Genesis i., has undergone a radical change within a quarter of a century, so that the opinion which was formerly accepted unanimously, is now treated almost with ridicule,] so the general view of the composition, authorship and literary character of certain books has, in the minds of those who have given these questions any considerable thought, become quite different.

It is a *fact* that entirely correct views as to any of these questions have not as yet been attained, nor may they be expected so long as human knowledge remains finite.

It is a *fact* that they who oppose most strenuously the claims of Higher Criticism take as representatives of that science those who hold the most extreme views. It is not right to suppose that all critics are Kuenens and Wellhausens. There are men like Delitzsch, Strack, Briggs and Curtiss, who accept to a greater or less extent these results, yet remain strictly evangelical.

It is a *fact* that the results which Higher Criticism *claims* to have reached have more in their favor than the majority of persons are willing to concede, and that